

Northwest Region Bycatch Plan Implementation Update – October 2004

In their November 2003 Bycatch Plan, the Northwest Region (NWR) and Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) set the following priority actions for implementation in 2004. Actions identified for 2004 are listed below with status updates. Those items listed as “not started” are still of interest to the NWR and NWFSC, but staff workload has not allowed for their pursuit.

Monitoring:

- Integrate 2002-2003 West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) data into groundfish bycatch model – **COMPLETE**, *WCGOP data integrated into bycatch model; model used by Pacific Council to recommend fishery management measures for 2005-2006.*
- Convert at-sea whiting fishery observer program from voluntary participation to mandatory participation – **COMPLETE**, *final rule published June 7, 2004 (69 FR 31751).*

Research:

- NMFS will convene a technical workshop to explore ways to solve problems with continuing to use the coded wire tag system to estimate fishery impacts on ESA-listed stocks while increasing the use of mark-selective fisheries – **COMPLETE**, *Workshop conducted June 7-10, 2004, at which U.S. and Canadian scientists presented reports to a panel of experts. That panel will develop a peer-reviewed report based on the presentations and subsequent analysis by December 2004. The report will be presented to the Pacific Salmon Commission and its participating management entities for review and discussion of potential future action.*
- Expand observer program coverage to assess bycatch in open-access fleet – **ONGOING**, *Observers continue to be deployed in multiple open-access fleets including California halibut, fixed gear, and the California nearshore. Coverage was expanded into the pink shrimp and the Oregon nearshore fisheries in May 2004.*

Management

- Complete programmatic bycatch environmental impact statement (EIS) for West Coast groundfish fisheries – **COMPLETE**, *Final EIS made available for public review 9/24/04 – 10/25/04.*
- Revise non-trawl/fixed gear 2004 groundfish landings limits based on early-2004 analysis of 2002-2003 WCGOP data – **COMPLETE**
- Determine whether Biological Opinion on effects of West Coast groundfish fishery on listed salmon species needs to be reinitiated – **ONGOING**, *NWFSC is analyzing the observer program data on salmon bycatch in groundfish fisheries. Once that biological assessment is complete, NWR will review whether the 1999 biological opinion needs to be reinitiated.*
- Draft Biological Assessment on effects of West Coast groundfish and halibut fisheries on short-tailed albatross – **Analysis to commence in FY05**

Education/Outreach

- Develop seabirds and fisheries interaction website for NWR – **NOT STARTED**
- Continue to work with the Pacific Council on development of its communications plan – **ONGOING**